

Review of *Spectacle and Diversity: Transnational Media and Global Culture* by Lee Artz (Routledge)

by [Brittney Jimenez-Bayardo](#) | [Issue 12.1 \(Spring 2023\)](#), [Book Reviews](#)

ABSTRACT Lee Artz's *Spectacle and Diversity: Transnational Media and Global Culture* brings to our attention the ways transnational media has created representations of global culture. By analyzing examples of nations with transnational media networks he acknowledges how each nation's media culture has become a reflection of transnational ideals. Artz critiques the transnational ideals that benefit elites and the careful fusing of the themes such as self-interest, social mobility, and individual successes into media to maintain the status quo. The book concludes with a plea for a non-capitalist international movement to bring forth a new media wave, which might benefit the interests of humanity.

KEYWORDS [media](#), [capitalism](#), [culture](#), [political economy](#)

Spectacle and Diversity: Transnational Media and Global Culture. By Lee Artz. New York, NY Routledge, 2022, 260 pp. ISBN 978-0-367-75417-4. US List: \$44.95

In *Spectacle and Diversity: Transnational Media and Global Culture*, Lee Artz engages our understanding of transnational media networks and how they have led to the creation of a global culture. Artz begins by unpacking contemporary capitalism and its social implications and then discussing the impact of cultural imperialism and transnationalism. The following chapters each explore a distinct geographic location and its media, examining partnerships and intertwining themes created in each medium. These themes explore messages or cultural values that media outlets promote through their stories and production to their intended audience. He ends with an argument about transnational media as a producer of global culture, including cultural consumption.

The first chapter, "Global Entertainment: Not Yet the Democratic Age," begins by identifying media structures and the distribution networks of entertainment, such as movies, television programming, and news frames. Though media has changed over time, particularly with the addition of streaming, commercial media outlets continue to build themes aimed at instituting social norms in communities. Artz argues that messages emanating from

TNMCs (transnational media corporations) define global entertainment and global culture. Partnerships amongst enterprises in various nations are increasing, as are the ideals they seek to embed into their communities. For instance Artz discusses individualistic ideals such as independence, personal needs, and profit. Media production teams impact a large workforce and viewership across borders and classes. Control of the media is thus central to control of power.

The second chapter, "Cultural Imperialism and Transnational Media," focuses on perspectives of transnational media from media industry owners, managers and politicians. Artz unpacks the overall culture produced by capitalism as a result of these stakeholders. Artz argues that the neoliberal push centers on themes of self-interest and expansion. By looking at examples of transnational media in India, China, Latin America, and Europe, Artz argues that media corporations in these nations developed in similar ways to create an overarching "global culture." For instance, the transnational capitalist class seeks to convey messages of growth and serving one's self-interests, but limits growth to benefit capitalism and to not question social inequities. The transnational capitalist class (TNCC) seeks to maximize profits by exploiting domestic labor from the working class within nations, justifying cross-border production. As media owners produce information and influence the cultural norms of the community, TNCCs disperse these normative ideas across borders and cultural identities.

In the next chapter, "Media in India: From Public to Private to Transnational," emphasizes India as one of the largest markets that embraced neoliberalism under elite Indian capitalist groups. This move privatized large industries and opened the media to foreign investments. Media became transnationally connected and investment driven, moving away from public interest to investor interest. The restructuring of the media meant conglomerates with capital had the ability to overtake the industry, transforming the film industry into a new national identity that evoked images of colorful films, complex dancing, and musicals. As such, dominant themes in Indian media have become consistent with liberal Western media values: critiquing inequality while maintaining systems that thrive on inequity.

Chapter 4, "Crouching Tigers: Transnational Media in and from China," focuses on China as a transnational economic power. Over the last thirty years, the Chinese government introduced a national culture consisting of elites' economic and political agendas. As such, dominant transnational ideologies have benefited elite agenda-setters and the transnational systems of capitalism. The growth of cinema in China has been led by these same ideals and helped consolidate their messages into a collective "cultural" identity. The Chinese government controls content that promotes its ideals and homogenizes its messages. Artz finds that China's joint ventures with TNMCs adapt the messages of transnational organizations to fit within the national media constraints but ultimately

reproduce the same global culture that TMNCs promote. Government oversight has meant that the TNMCs must navigate both capitalism and nationalism within the Chinese media industry.

Chapter 5, "Latin America from Telenovelas to Transnational Media," engages the impact of colonization across Latin America and the ways the United States continues to impact media in the region. Due to colonization, Latin American countries have struggled to create an independent media culture as they remain impacted by colonial interests. Transnational media dominated by Western ideals have proliferated across Latin America to homogenize identities and cultural norms encoded into media. Artz ties this homogenization to a need to divert attention from existing social inequalities. The entertainment media has focused on stories that depict individuals "overcoming" traits viewed as undesirable, such as those associated with lower social classes, rather than calling for systemic changes. By examining the popular Latin American telenovela genre, Artz asserts that social conventions are embedded in this media, creating dominant universal themes, such as upward social mobility, national pride, and material successes, across Latin America. TNMCs produce a "diverse" world to embody their desire for individual consumerism and for workers to believe the messages they receive via media to reproduce capitalist interests.

Chapter 6, "The New Frontiers of Europe: Transnational Media Partnerships," discusses the European Union's transnational media's attempt to build a diverse and unified European culture. The diverse cultures across the EU collaborations raise the question of whose beliefs and interests these media messages serve? Entertainment industries in the EU took on partnerships with those in the US to adapt their media forms to meet the needs of their privatized media, and partnerships have primarily sought to financially benefit investors and media companies. These transnational projects have created one of Europe's most key media forms: the television miniseries. The messages within miniseries mirror those found in other transnational partnerships but adapted in a way that serves EU consumers.

The final chapter, "The Hegemonic Appeal of Spectacle and Diversity," elaborates on the links between transnational media, capitalism, and the countries' national and regional political economies. Artz argues that entertainment and media contain and reproduce social norms and conventions that become hegemonic as they are incorporated in each nation's media. The spreading of these norms can be linked to those invested in its maintenance: investors, and national or governmental networks. Artz also acknowledges that many of these norms can easily be accommodated because of countries' similar colonial rules that initiated these norms. Transnational capitalism is not loyal to any country but rather is enforced by the governments which stand to benefit from its maintenance.

Artz ends the book with a thoughtful call to action for a non-capitalist international movement to resist current media.

Overall, through carefully curated examples of transnational media, Artz supports his compelling argument that transnational media networks have built alliances that distribute hegemonic social norms while remaining culturally relevant to their communities. Partnerships between TNMCs have also allowed their materials to be distributed to a larger consumer base. Through these TNMCs, transnational media can impose norms that maintain the status quo by portraying marginalized characters as having little power in fighting injustices. By consuming these norms and themes, viewers come to accommodate behaviors that benefit capitalism and governments gain the viewers' consent to impose them. The power of media cannot be underestimated.

Author Information



Brittney Jimenez-Bayardo

Brittney Jimenez-Bayardo is a second-year doctoral student at UC Santa Cruz's Latin American and Latino Studies Program. She has a background in ethnic studies and received her master's degree in 2021 from CSU Northridge in Chicana/o/x Studies. Her master's thesis, "Constructing Community: San Fernando Valley Youth and Community Activism," focused on the different routes through which youth become involved in social movements. Her current research looks at Chicana youth organizing, social movements, and the role of social media in building solidarities.

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